

Representative Kristina Roegner, Chair
The Ohio House of Representatives
Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee
February 13, 2018

Testimony of Ellen Greene Bush in support of House Resolution 74

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of an amendment to the United States Constitution that Ohio House Resolution 74 will help achieve. This resolution affirms every citizen's right to vote, constitutional rights for natural persons only, and money as property and not "free speech."

I would like to tell you a little about myself. I am a life-long citizen of Ohio. I grew up in Huron and have spent most of my adulthood living along Lake Erie. I have an enduring love for Ohio's natural resources. The last few years have been disappointing as I have watched the quality of our lake deteriorate and seen the destruction that natural gas pipelines are having on our environment. I have become involved with this issue by educating myself, writing letters, contacting legislators, and participating in environmental advocacy groups.

But increasingly I have felt inept to make change. Concentrated animal farms and large energy corporations have more power than I do regarding the quality of Lake Erie. Decision-makers listen to those who have the money to persuade them. And my experiences are not that different from most Ohioans. We feel excluded because we ARE excluded. The political system is dominated by the resources of a few.

Furthermore, issues that concern me, like net neutrality, tax reform, the opioid epidemic, and even tipping my waitress at dinner, have been and are being influenced by large corporations and their lobbying efforts. This has led me to look beyond "issues" and toward a broader solution: change that promotes "one citizen, one vote." If we want democracy to thrive, changes must be made toward voting rights, fair electoral districts, reform of the electoral college, and especially reversing the disastrous effects of Citizens United.

The Supreme Court got it wrong in their decisions leading up to and including Citizens United vs. FCC. In the past eight years our country has seen an increase in money spent toward lobbying and political campaigns. The 2016 election was the most expensive in American history, and most of the money came from less than 1% of the population. In fact, three billionaires alone spent 200 million dollars.

Closer to home, the pharmaceutical industry poured a record amount of money into their campaign to defeat Ohio Issue 2 in November 2017 with positive results for their corporations but not necessarily for Ohio's budget and citizens. And the 2012 U.S. Senate race in Ohio was one of the most expensive in U. S. history.

Campaign contributions raised or spent by candidates, political parties, and some political action committees must be disclosed to the public. But outside interest groups, corporations, and nonprofit organizations can bypass these rules under some circumstances. Unions and wealthy individuals donate a lot of money, but global corporations are massive contributors to federal, state and local elections. This spending makes Americans like me wary, so corporations hide

their spending. For example, in recent years, three pathways for corporate money, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Democratic Governors' Association, and the Republican Governors' Association, accounted for more than \$700 million in election spending. Money is not speech, it is power.

When the Supreme Court makes an interpretation of the Constitution which promotes such catastrophic results, the mistake may be corrected only by the Court itself or a Constitutional amendment. Constitutional amendments are vital to democracy, and we have used this tool twenty-seven times. Constitutional amendments have reversed Supreme Court mistakes and led to the establishment of civil rights for all citizens, the right of all male citizens to vote, the right of women to vote, and the right of all citizens over age 18 to vote. 2018 is the time to support a constitutional amendment again.

There is a grassroots uprising of groups throughout the country working to seek a 28th amendment, including American Promise, Move to Amend, Take Back Our Republic, and Wolf Pac. I chose to become involved in American Promise because of its cross-partisan approach. We in Port Clinton have the first and only American Promise group in Ohio and have been active since November 2017, getting educated about a 28th amendment, writing letters to the editor, and talking to our elected officials.

I truly believe this NOT a partisan issue. Think about it: did any of you run for elected office to fundraise? how much of your time is spent thinking about the effect of your decisions on the potential to get campaign money? do you spend more time with your constituents or with lobbyists? My guess is that you chose government service because you enjoy public policy, interaction with constituents, and making a positive impact on your district.

The American people support reform. On election day in November 2017, millions of voters had a chance to vote on 28th amendment ballot initiatives. They all passed, no matter whether the voters were mostly Democrats or mostly Republicans. Nearly 800 cities and towns around the country, including 23 in Ohio, have joined nineteen states in passing similar resolutions.

Here in Ohio, we just had successful reform for determining our Congressional districts. This happened because Republican and Democratic legislators, fair election groups, and constituents worked together for a solution. We have set a precedent. Let us continue in this way.

The 28th Amendment will return free speech rights to us as citizens and allow we, the people, to govern. Representational democracy will be back! I am grateful for the opportunity as a constituent to submit this testimony for your consideration and encourage your support of this resolution.

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